



Wisconsin State Senate

**John Lehman**

Senator – 21st District

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**TESTIMONY OF SENATOR JOHN LEHMAN  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS,  
BIOTECHNOLOGY AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Senate Bill 49**

**April 3, 2007**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, thank you for scheduling this hearing on Senate Bill 49.

Representative Musser and I introduced this bill to provide certain disabled veterans and former prisoners of war with lifetime, year-round, free state park access. The proposal also allows these veterans free admission to Heritage Hill State Historical Park and all state trails. Wisconsin is one of only a handful of states that does not offer benefits to our disabled veterans with regard to accessing state parks and trails.

In order to qualify for this new benefit, veterans will present the Department of Natural Resources with documentation from the federal Department of Defense that indicates former POW status or proof that the veteran receives disability benefits for a 70% or greater service-connected disability. The DNR will then issue the veteran a special identification card allowing him or her access to the to state park facilities at no cost.

Thousands of veterans will benefit from this proposal's passage. Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary John Scocos has written a letter in support of providing free access to state parks. A copy of this letter will be distributed to each committee member.

Further, the bill carries a minimal fiscal effect on the DNR, especially in light of the significant personal and economic sacrifices our veterans have made so that we can go about our daily lives without fear. Senate Bill 49 is another small step toward thanking these brave men and women of Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

# TERRY MUSSEY

STATE REPRESENTATIVE - 92<sup>ND</sup> Assembly District

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April 3, 2007

Good Morning Chair and Committee Members:

I regret I cannot be at this hearing but am requesting that you support Senate Bill 49.

I have introduced the companion bill, Assembly Bill 108.

Currently most vehicles must have a vehicle admission sticker to enter state parks and an admission fee is charged for using state trails.

This bill would exempt two very honorable groups of Wisconsin residents:

- ▶ Veterans with a 70 percent or greater service connected disability and
- ▶ veterans who were held as a prisoner of war.

This bill will be of minimal cost to the Department of Natural Resources --- but one cannot compare those costs to what these disabled and Prisoner of War veterans have paid - as a result of defending our freedoms.

Each disabled veteran and former POW will need documentation from the Federal Veterans Administration as proof of their eligibility for free state parks and trail admission.

This is respectable legislation. It is time to honor the sacrifices of these veterans. Please allow them to enter and use our terrific state parks and trails at no cost - by exempting them from the purchase of a vehicle admission sticker and fee.

Please support Senate Bill 49 and recommend it for passage.

Thank you.



Jim Doyle, Governor  
John A. Scocos, Secretary

**STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

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April 3, 2007

Senator Jim Sullivan, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs,  
Biotechnology and Financial Institutions  
Room 15 South, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Sullivan and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and the nearly half-million veterans we serve, thank you for holding today's hearing on 2007 Bill Senate 49, which would provide free state park access to state veterans with a 70% or greater service-connected disability rating and ex-Prisoners of War. We are in full support of the intent of this bill.

We have been pleased to work with the Senator John Lehman, who authored the bill, and with the Department of Natural Resources, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau and the Legislature in developing information and data regarding the bill.

Again, thank you for your support for today's legislation, and for your demonstrated commitment to honoring and assisting those who served our nation in uniform in its times of need.

Sincerely,  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Scocos", is written over a horizontal line.

JOHN A. SCOCOS  
Secretary

April 3 2007

It is an honor for me to be here today!

I 'm a Viet Nam Veteran 1966-1967 4<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> and 9th Inf. Division. We had our reunion in Milwaukee in August 2005 , I had a great time! It was full of both happiness and sadness. The happiness was seeing and talking to the guys and there wives. The sadness was that we all still are suffering in some way or other from the War.

While at the reunion I talked to other veterans that liked to camp like myself and they told me about Free State DNR benefits given to their veterans from other states. I talk to State Representative John Lehman and we came up with 2005 ASSEMBLY BILL 906, now 2007 assembly bill 108 and 2007 senate bill 49. It is a great first step in granting Veterans with 70% disability or more Free access to The State Parks System.

A visit to our fine State Parks by a veteran would help them and their family live with the life long stress the war has left them to deal with, usually alone.

I hope everyone here today will give your full support to senate Bill 49 and move it through the Senate with great speed!! This is a real chance of a life time to say Thanks to all Veterans for years to come!

If you feel their should be improvements made to this bill, please join in and lets together get the job done today ! Thank you!

I feel it should be a life long sticker with no hassle to get it! After four years of the wrong war, thousands dead ,thousands wounded, no end in sight and the ugly side of the VA exposed at Walter Reed the voters have little tolerance for politicians that don't truly support the troops!

Thanks, to all the people that have supported the bill and a special Thanks to my Brother in law John Ingle, a Vietnam veteran also, who keeps urging me forward!



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THANK YOU!!!